

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A network communications system is provided for allowing a group of computer users in a conference room or similar small work environment to access an Ethernet local area network (LAN) and to provide peer-to-peer group networking without connection to a backbone network.

The system includes multiple (for example, 4 or 8) client computer ports each including a
5 removable spring loaded cable dispenser carrying an extendible/retractable Category 5 LAN cable terminated with an RJ-45 plug for connection to a client computer's network adapter. Combined power/Ethernet LAN cables connect the system to an enterprise network and to a source of electrical power, and permit cascading of up to three 8-port systems.

In use, a computer user pulls out the cable from one of the client ports and inserts the
10 RJ-45 plug into the RJ-45 jack on the network adapter carried by the computer. After completion of the networking session, the user unplugs the cable which is automatically retracted by the spring loaded cable reel. A cable management system is thereby provided which eliminates the tangle or clutter of multiple cables encountered in existing systems.

CC253244.1
008193D8322
03/24/2000 lam